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IS THIS A MEETING OF THE

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How Extension Workers
Can Improve Their Meetings

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IS THIS A MEETING OF THE **BORED?**

How Extension Workers Can Improve Their Meetings

By Ellen J. Hall

Division of Information Programs

Don't bore your audience by conducting a carelessly planned meeting. Remember if you do you are robbing them of valuable time and energy.

A few changes could make your meetings sparkle.



GETTING READY

Try This!

First of all, have a good reason for holding the meeting. What do you hope to accomplish? Prepare an agenda.

Know your audience—their background and interests.

Select a speaker who knows his subject. See that he knows the purpose of the meeting and how much time he will have.

Notify your audience in advance, in writing, or in the newspaper, where the meeting will be held, the time, the name of the speaker, and his subject.

Not This!

Hold a meeting just for meeting's sake.

Neglect to find out what kind of audience will be there.

Let each speaker take as long as he wants. This will make the meeting long and tiresome or too short to be worthwhile.

Keep your plans secret, or delay letting your audience know about the meeting until it is too late for them to attend.



YOUR MEETING PLACE

Try This!

Convenient—Arrange meetings on a first floor or in a building with ample stairways or big elevators. Choose a place that's centrally located for most of your audience.

Adequate—Try to assure everybody a seat and a chance to see and hear easily.

Clean—Check on whether the janitor has been on the job . . . windows clean, floors swept, chairs dusted, ashtrays emptied.

Comfortable Temperature—Adjust heat and air before meeting starts so that most of the audience will be unaware of temperature.

Not This!

Unhandy—"Mountain-climbing" meetings. Held on fourth floor. Serviced by narrow stairway or too small elevator. Takes an hour for the group to get to the coffee shop and back—if they come back.

Unsuitable—A meeting place too small for the audience or so big they rattle around in it. Posts in the way to block their view.

Dirty—Walk into the meeting place at the last minute, find floors, chairs, ashtrays filthy, and it's too late to do anything about it.

Too Hot or Too Cold—Meetings for Eskimos or Hottentots, where you freeze or burn. Puts audience to sleep or drives them home for more wraps.



YOUR EQUIPMENT

Try This!

Use loudspeakers, movie and slide projectors, easels and flannelboards with spotlights, that you've checked for good condition. Be sure they are adequate for the size of the audience and room. Install them where everyone can see and hear easily.

Use visuals large enough, with lettering that the most distant person in the audience can see.

Place a pitcher of water and glasses at the speakers' stand.

Not This!

The loudspeaker gets the attention all during the meeting. It squeals and squawks. People work on it. Finally your invited speaker gives up and quits. The audience has already stopped listening. Slide projectors too small or dim, easels that must be set up during the meeting or don't work, will get the same result.

Use tiny visuals, with lettering too small to be seen by people in the back, guaranteed to annoy audience. Charts, movies, and slides shown at awkward angles help, too.

"Search-for-the-oasis" meetings point up the shortage of water in the area. Speaker's throat gets dry and everyone scurries for a glass of water for him. By the time it arrives, the audience is lost, strayed, or gone.



STAY IN THE DRIVER'S SEAT

Try This!

See that the person who introduces the speaker gives a short summary of the speaker's background and subject—not over one or two minutes.

Control discussions, to save audience's time from individual personality clashes.

Stick to your schedule. Start and end the meeting on time. This will help hold interest and make the audience feel they are important.

Be enthusiastic; talk so people can understand; *have some fun!*

Have a break in long meetings—time to stretch or get some refreshments.

Not This!

Long-winded or uninformed introduction bores the audience long before the speaker has a shot at them.

A verbal slug-fest is fun for the contestants, may embarrass others into leaving.

Start meeting late. Latecomers will be pleased. Others will feel they are wasting their time, or will be late for other appointments.

Monotones, lack of variety, let rigor mortis set in before the meeting gets off the ground.

Tire your audience—keep them in their seats throughout the meeting.



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